

Exploration of the Narrative Ability Cultivation Model for Telling Chinese Stories in English in College English Teaching

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of increasingly profound global cultural exchanges, college English teaching shoulders the significant mission of cultivating students' intercultural communication competence. How to effectively convey the connotations of Chinese culture through English narratives has become a crucial issue confronting current foreign language education. Based on theories of intercultural communication, narratology, cultural identity, and second language acquisition, this study systematically analyzes the constituent elements of narrative ability required for telling Chinese stories in English. These core competencies include thematic refinement, logical organization, cultural translation, and emotional resonance. On this foundation, the research constructs a comprehensive cultivation model encompassing hierarchical teaching objectives, modular teaching content, task-driven teaching methods, and a pluralistic dynamic evaluation system. This model aims to enhance students' intercultural narrative competence and comprehensive humanistic qualities by integrating Chinese story narration into college English teaching, thereby providing theoretical reference and practical pathways for promoting the international dissemination of Chinese culture and the innovation and reform of foreign language education.

Keywords: Chinese story narration; narrative ability; college English teaching; cultivation model; intercultural communication

Introduction

With the continuous deepening of globalization, cultural exchange has become a vital bridge for mutual understanding and cooperation among nations. Against this backdrop, how to effectively tell Chinese stories and convey the values of Chinese culture through English, as a global lingua franca, has emerged as a significant issue for college English teaching. While current college English instruction emphasizes the cultivation of language skills, it still requires strengthened systematic training in students' intercultural narrative ability. Whether students can accurately, vividly, and profoundly explain the connotations of Chinese culture in English not only influences the comprehensive development of their personal language competence but also affects the expression and dissemination of Chinese culture within the international discourse system. Therefore, constructing a teaching model centered on the cultivation of narrative ability holds important theoretical significance and practical value. Based on multidimensional theories such as intercultural communication, narratology, cultural identity, and second language acquisition, this study conducts an in-depth analysis of the connotation and composition of narrative ability required for telling Chinese stories in English. Furthermore, it designs a college English teaching cultivation model integrated with Chinese story narration, aiming to provide operable pathways for enhancing students' intercultural communication competence and humanistic qualities, thereby promoting the transformation of college English teaching from singular language training to comprehensive cultural competence cultivation.

1. Theoretical Basis and Rationale for Telling Chinese Stories in English

1.1 Core Tenets and Guiding Value of Intercultural Communication Theory

Intercultural communication theory focuses on the process of information exchange between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. Its core tenets lie in understanding and addressing the complexities of encoding and decoding brought about by cultural differences. This

theory indicates that effective communication relies not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the comprehension of deep-seated cultural conventions, values, and thinking patterns. In the process of telling Chinese stories in English, this theory holds fundamental guiding value.

Narrators need to transcend literal translation and engage in deep cultural translation, transforming the cultural specificity embedded in Chinese stories into symbols and meanings that can be understood and accepted within the target audience's cultural context^[1]. For instance, for concepts with profound cultural connotations such as "benevolence" and "righteousness", it is necessary to employ contextualized explanations or seek cultural equivalents for transmission, rather than pursuing absolutely equivalent vocabulary. Intercultural communication theory provides a framework of cultural sensitivity for narrators, emphasizing the avoidance of ethnocentrism in the narrative process and the active construction of a shared meaning space, thereby achieving a shift from one-way information output to two-way cultural communication and understanding.

1.2 The Logic of Story Construction under the Framework of Narratological Theory

Narratology provides systematic analytical tools for the structure and expression of stories. It regards a story as an organic whole composed of both story (the content being narrated) and discourse (the manner of narration). Under the framework of narratological theory, telling Chinese stories in English involves a rigorous logic of story construction. At the story level, it requires the selection and refinement of narrative material, the determination of core events, character roles, and thematic ideas, ensuring the story itself possesses internal consistency and appeal.

The discourse level concerns the choice of narrative strategies, including the determination of narrative perspective (such as first-person perspective to enhance a sense of personal experience, or omniscient perspective to present a macro panorama), the arrangement of plot (such as linear narrative or flashback, embedded narration), and the control of narrative pace. This theoretical framework reminds us that successful Chinese story narration relies not only on the authenticity or uniqueness of the content but also on its conformity to universal narrative logic and aesthetic expectations. By applying narratological principles, narrators can systematically organize scattered cultural elements into a narrative flow with emotional tension and intellectual depth, thereby enhancing the story's artistic impact and communicative effectiveness.

1.3 The Intrinsic Connection Between Cultural Identity and the Construction of an External Discourse System

Cultural identity theory explores how individuals or groups define themselves and understand their position in the broader world through cultural narratives. Essentially, telling Chinese stories in English constitutes a practice of actively constructing cultural identity and an external discourse system. The act of narration itself constitutes an expression and affirmation of identity. Through the selection of which stories to tell and how to tell them, narrators actually participate in defining a dynamic, contemporary Chinese cultural identity that can be understood by the external world^[2].

This process is intrinsically linked to the construction of a persuasive external discourse system. A diverse, rich, and authentic collection of stories can effectively challenge homogenized cultural stereotypes and demonstrate the complexity and fluidity of cultural identity. When learners can confidently and skillfully use an international lingua franca to narrate stories derived from their own cultural traditions and modern life, they are not merely transmitting information but are constructing an equal and dialogic intercultural relationship, thereby transforming the external discourse system from a theoretical concept into an embodied communicative practice.

1.4 The Integration of Second Language Acquisition Theory and Culture-Content-Driven Language Teaching

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory provides pedagogical rationale for integrating Chinese story narration into college English teaching. Traditional language teaching often separates linguistic form from cultural content, whereas SLA research, particularly theories concerning motivation, affective filtering, and meaning negotiation, indicates that meaningful, content-rich communicative tasks can more effectively promote the internalization and development of language proficiency. Using Chinese story narration as the core driver for language teaching precisely places language learning within a context of genuine communicative needs and cultural significance.

When learners actively search for precise vocabulary, authentic expressions, and complex sentence structures in order to tell a vivid story, language learning transforms from passive knowledge reception into active meaning construction. This content and language integrated learning approach can significantly enhance learners' intrinsic motivation and reduce anxiety during foreign language use. Furthermore, narrative tasks inherently encompass various language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, requiring learners to engage in comprehensive language application, which aligns closely with the communicative competence and comprehensive language literacy development goals advocated by SLA theory.

2. Analysis of Constituent Elements of Narrative Competence in Telling Chinese Stories in English

2.1 Theme Extraction and Value Mining Capacity in Intercultural Narrative Comprehension

In-depth comprehension of narrative materials and the subsequent extraction of universally significant themes and values constitute the starting point of narrative practice. This capacity requires narrators to transcend superficial phenomena and events within stories to perceive their inherent cultural logic and spiritual essence. For narrating Chinese stories, this necessitates identifying core themes from the rich cultural heritage, social phenomena, and life practices that both reflect distinctive national cultural characteristics and resonate with universal human emotions. Examples include the pursuit of harmonious relationships, the emphasis on family values, the admiration of perseverance, or the embodiment of ecological wisdom.

Value mining involves further elucidating the philosophical reflections and humanistic concerns carried by these identified themes. This process ensures the themes are presented not merely as cultural facts but as referential concepts capable of engaging in dialogue with the external world. This procedure demands that narrators possess profound and elevated cultural interpretive abilities, enabling them to connect specific narrative materials with broader cultural narrative contexts. This approach guarantees that the stories told possess intellectual depth and communicative penetration.

2.2 Logical Organization and Plot Design Capacity in Narrative Discourse Construction

After clarifying thematic values, the construction of an engaging and structurally complete text through effective narrative discourse represents the core manifestation of narrative competence. Logical organization ability involves the comprehensive planning and arrangement of narrative materials, including establishing a clear narrative thread, reasonably configuring narrative units such as background, cause, development, climax, and resolution, and ensuring cohesive transitions between components that adhere to causal and temporal-spatial logic. Plot design capacity advances further by focusing on artistic techniques such as creating suspense, generating conflict, and employing foreshadowing and echoes to enhance narrative tension and appeal^[3].

A straightforward narrative often lacks emotional impact, whereas a meticulously designed plot can effectively capture the audience's attention and guide their emotional engagement and cognitive participation. In cross-cultural contexts, mastering narrative logic and plot pacing requires balancing native cultural aesthetics with the reception habits of the target audience. This approach constructs a discourse structure that preserves cultural distinctiveness while conforming to universal narrative conventions, thereby achieving effective story transmission and reception.

2.3 Cultural Translation and Semiotic Application Capacity in Cross-cultural Context Adaptation

The success of cross-cultural narrative largely depends on the narrator's ability to perform cultural translation and employ semiotic resources effectively. Cultural translation does not seek absolute lexical equivalence but strives to identify optimal expressions within the target language culture that convey the connotations of the source culture. This requires the narrator to accurately identify culture-specific items in the source text, such as allusions, proverbs, customs, and conceptual values, and assess their comprehensibility for the target audience.

For elements that may cause comprehension barriers, appropriate strategies must be adopted, including paraphrasing, analogy, creating new cultural images, or providing contextual explanations. These approaches aim to achieve a balance between preserving cultural heterogeneity and ensuring communicative fluency. Semiotic application capacity manifests in the selection of linguistic signs and

potential non-verbal signs, encompassing the use of culturally symbolic vocabulary, constructing easily associable metaphors, and adjusting various stylistic registers to suit different narrative contents and occasions. This capacity enables narrators to construct a cultural world that is both authentically perceptible and readily accessible.

2.4 Narrative Perspective and Rhetorical Strategy Selection Capacity in Evoking Emotional Resonance

The purpose of narrative extends beyond mere information delivery to achieving emotional impact and resonance. The capacity to evoke emotional resonance serves as an advanced metric for evaluating narrative effectiveness, primarily realized through the selection of narrative perspective and rhetorical strategies. Narrative perspective determines whose eyes the audience sees the story through and what information they can access. A first-person perspective can create a sense of immediacy and authenticity, a second-person perspective can shorten the psychological distance to the audience, while a third-person perspective facilitates the presentation of a broader panorama and objective commentary.

Flexibly selecting the perspective according to the narrative objective is crucial for guiding the audience's emotional investment. The selection of rhetorical strategies further strengthens this emotional connection, encompassing techniques such as using parallelism to enhance rhythmic force, employing rhetorical questions to provoke thought, utilizing metaphors to concretize abstract concepts, and using detailed descriptions to create vivid imagery and touch the heartstrings. In cross-cultural narration, the choice of rhetorical devices must consider their emotional triggering effects across different cultures, prioritizing those emotional triggers with universal applicability to bridge cultural divides and establish emotional understanding and resonance based on shared human experiences^[4].

3. Design of a College English Teaching Cultivation Model Integrating Chinese Story Narration

3.1 Hierarchical Teaching Objectives Oriented Towards Narrative Competence

The establishment of teaching objectives should follow the inherent developmental logic of narrative competence, constructing a hierarchical system that progresses from elementary to advanced levels and from foundational to comprehensive skills. The elementary stage objectives focus on cultivating basic narrative abilities, requiring learners to identify fundamental cultural elements in Chinese stories and utilize accurate English vocabulary and basic sentence patterns for simple story retelling and factual description, thereby ensuring informational completeness and linguistic accuracy.

The intermediate stage objectives emphasize narrative structural integrity and initial attempts at cultural translation. Learners need to master basic narrative structures, capable of logically organizing source materials, and begin employing simple strategies such as cultural analogy and paraphrasing to handle culture-specific items, ultimately producing coherent narrative texts with adequate comprehensibility. The advanced stage objectives pursue narrative artistry and communicative effectiveness, requiring learners to flexibly employ multiple narrative perspectives and rhetorical devices, independently creating impactful creative narratives capable of eliciting cross-cultural resonance, thereby demonstrating their understanding and integration of Chinese and Western narrative traditions. This spiraling objective system provides clear directional guidance for teaching implementation.

3.2 Modular Restructuring of Teaching Content Based on Narrative Types

To achieve the hierarchical teaching objectives, it is necessary to modularly restructure the existing college English teaching content, shifting from the traditional organization centered on linguistic knowledge points to content integration organized around narrative types. The teaching content can be divided into core modules based on the connotations and forms of stories, such as a personal experiences and family memories narrative module, a cultural heritage and customs interpretation module, a social phenomena and contemporary life depiction module, and a philosophical wisdom and literary allusions exegesis module.

Each module internally integrates relevant language knowledge, cultural background, narrative techniques, and analytical frameworks. Taking the cultural heritage module as an example, its content can encompass specific themes such as traditional festivals, folk arts, and architectural characteristics, accompanied by corresponding specialized vocabulary, cultural background knowledge, descriptive and

interpretive sentence structures, as well as analysis of successful narrative examples of similar themes. This modular design not only systematizes the teaching content more effectively but also provides teachers with the flexibility to combine teaching units, enabling adaptive adjustments based on learners from different professional backgrounds and language proficiency levels^[5].

3.3 Creating Authentic Context Through Narrative Task-Driven Teaching Methods

The innovation of teaching methods serves as the core driving force of the cultivation model, with the key lying in creating near-authentic cross-cultural narrative contexts that utilize task-driven approaches to promote language application and ability development. Project-based learning constitutes the primary teaching format, where learners comprehensively apply various narrative competencies throughout the entire process of completing projects. These projects involve designing a series of challenging narrative tasks, such as producing city cultural guide videos for international friends, writing English blogs exploring personal cultural identity, or adapting Chinese classical fables into modern English short plays.

Scenario simulations and role-playing activities provide learners with safe application environments by replicating situations such as cultural presentations at international academic conferences or thematic speeches at cultural exchange salons. These activities train learners' improvisational narrative skills and on-site response capabilities. The introduction of digital storytelling tools expands the boundaries of narrative expression, encouraging learners to integrate text, images, sound, and music through multimedia means to create vivid and multidimensional digital story works. This approach significantly enhances narrative appeal and emotional impact. All these methods collectively emphasize learners' agency in meaning construction, transforming language learning into purposeful communicative acts with authentic audiences.

3.4 Constructing a Pluralistic Dynamic Evaluation System Emphasizing Both Process and Outcome

A scientific and effective evaluation system constitutes a key mechanism for ensuring the operation and optimization of the cultivation model. This system should break through the traditional evaluation model that relies solely on summative examinations, shifting towards a pluralistic dynamic evaluation that focuses on the learning process, competency development, and final outcomes. Formative assessment runs through the entire teaching process, involving continuous observation and recording of learners' narrative material notes, contributions to group discussions, iterations of story drafts, and performance in classroom presentations, while providing timely diagnostic feedback to guide learners in continuous revision and improvement^[6].

The evaluation subjects achieve diversification, integrating teacher assessment, learner self-assessment, and peer evaluation. Feedback from international readers or listeners of different cultural backgrounds is particularly encouraged to test the cross-cultural comprehensibility of narrative works. Summative evaluation, meanwhile, focuses on the comprehensive assessment of the final narrative product. It establishes evaluation criteria that combine quantitative rubrics and qualitative descriptions across multiple dimensions, including content depth, structural logic, appropriateness of cultural translation, linguistic accuracy, rhetorical effectiveness, and degree of emotional resonance. This evaluation system, which values both process and outcome, not only measures the development of learners' narrative ability more comprehensively and fairly but also itself becomes a crucial link for promoting reflection and learning.

Conclusion

This study, through theoretical exploration and model construction, systematically elaborates on the connotation of narrative competence in telling Chinese stories in English and its cultivation pathways. The research indicates that effective Chinese story narration requires not only a solid language foundation but also relies on a profound understanding of cultural themes, the rational construction of narrative logic, the appropriate translation of cultural symbols, and the precise elicitation of emotional resonance. Based on this, the study proposes a comprehensive cultivation model supported by hierarchical objectives, modular content, task-based methods, and pluralistic evaluation, providing a theoretical framework and practical plan for the systematic cultivation of narrative competence in college English teaching.

Future research could further explore differentiated pathways for cultivating narrative competence

across various disciplinary backgrounds, develop more targeted teaching resources and evaluation tools, and simultaneously focus on the application potential of digital technology in teaching Chinese story narration. Furthermore, how to verify the effectiveness of this model through long-term tracking and empirical research, as well as how to build an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural narrative teaching community on this basis, are also directions worthy of in-depth exploration.

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